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HOW TO WIN

Putting the big stick back

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Wars cannot be waged without the support of the Congress and the people. But there are times when the Congress and the people may not recognize our vital interests in Third World conflicts.

Leaders should lead and not just follow uninformed public opinion. It is their responsibility to educate the people and the Congress on where our vital interests are and then gain support for whatever military actions may be necessary to protect them. Leaders who do only what opinion polls indicate that uninformed voters will support are not true leaders, and if America follows

them, it will cease to be a great nation.

Trotsky once wrote, "You may not be interested in strategy, but strategy is interested in you." Uninformed people may not be interested in affecting what goes on in the Third World. But what goes on in the Third World is interested in affecting them.

We should be selective insofar as our involvement in Third World conflicts is concerned. As Frederick the Great observed, "He who attempts to defend everywhere, defends nothing." Simply because we are the major Free World power does not mean that we have a responsibility

for everything that goes wrong in the world.

But as Vietnam so clearly demonstrated, victory by a Soviet proxy in one Third World conflict encourages Soviet adventurism and leads to more aggression in other parts of the Third World. Therefore, no instance of Soviet aggression anywhere in the Third World should go unchallenged by the West.

Our goal should always be to use force as a last resort. But the capability and the will to use force as a first resort when our interests are threatened reduces the possibility of having to use force as a last resort, when the risk of casualties would be far greater.

Vietnam highlighted the importance of blocking aggression early. Winston Churchill made the point that World War II was an unnecessary war because it could have been prevented by timely action against Hitler when he launched his conquests of smaller countries. But at the time European leaders did not consider them vital to their interests.

Everyone agrees that we should never commit our forces to a losing cause. But to win must be properly defined. We are a defensive power. We are not trying to conquer other countries. That is why we must have a policy in which we will fight limited wars if they are necessary to achieve limited goals. We win if we prevent the enemy from winning.

The world has probably seen its last conventional war between major powers. In the end, the world conflict will probably be decided by the outcome of unconventional, limited wars. A president must not be faced with the option of either waging total war or accepting total defeat.

In the wake of Vietnam, however, Congress has tried to force presidents to make exactly that choice by passing measures which drastically curtail their ability to use limited and unconventional military power.

The War Powers Act makes it impossible for a president to act swiftly and secretly in a crisis and permits Congress to pull our troops out simply by doing *nothing* — by failing to pass either a resolution for

or against the president's action.

The Foreign Assistance Act limits aid to governments that do not have squeaky-clean human-rights records. Had it been in force during World War II, it would have prevented us from assisting our ally, the Soviet Union, against Hitler.

The Clark Amendment of 1976, (recently repealed) which forbade covert aid to the freedom fighters in Angola, gave Cuba and the Soviet Union the green light for their covert activities in Angola and around the world.

The Boland Amendment of 1982 paved the way for the disastrous decision by Congress to cut off all covert aid to the "contras" fighting the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

These measures require a president to wage war under Marquis of Queensbury rules in a world where good manners are potentially fatal hindrances. The Soviets observe no rules of engagement except the one that says winning is everything. No one suggests that we should become like them in order to prevail. It was Nietzsche who wrote, "Who fights with crocodiles becomes one." But we must also remember that he who does not fight will be devoured by crocodiles.

There are no limits on the Soviets' power to invade, overthrow, and undermine any non-Communist government or to arm, strengthen, and encourage any aggressive Communist government. Hamstringing our power to respond in such instances invites further aggression. Furthermore, we must at times assist governments fighting Communist aggression even if their human-rights records do not meet our standards. With our assistance and

influence, their people will have a chance to have some human rights; under the Communists, they will have none.

And we must face up to the reality that covert war is a fact of life in the Third World. If every shipment of arms to an anti-Communist government or group requires a full-blown congressional investigation, the arms will never leave the dock, and our friends will come up empty-handed. The Soviets and their surrogates, meanwhile, will fight harder and win faster in country after country, just as they did during the late 1970s.

Ponting

The outstretched hand of diplomacy will have a very weak grip unless a president holds the scepter of credible military power in his other hand. The pace and the nature of events in the modern world make it more important than ever for a president to have the ability to make expeditious use of the full range of our military and intelligence forces when the situation calls for it. He cannot wait on the 535 members of Congress to make these quick, tough decisions for him. Events will not wait for us to respond.

As Charles de Gaulle observed shortly before his death, members of parliaments can paralyze policy; they cannot initiate it. Congressional leadership means leadership by consensus, and consensus leadership is no leadership. By the time a consensus has formed, the time to act has passed. Congress is a deliberative body; its wheels grind slowly, often maddeningly so. A president, however, must look, think, and then act decisively.

The War Powers Act and the other measures that limit a president's latitude are lingering symptoms of the Vietnam syndrome, manifestations of the fear of our own strength that swept America following our failure in Indochina.

Those days are now past. If we are to hold our own in the crucial battles of the Third World War, the president and Congress should join together in an effort to remove these self-defeating restrictions from the lawbooks.

This is the fourth of 11 monthly articles by Richard M. Nixon that will appear in the Washington times by arrangement with the News America Syndicate.